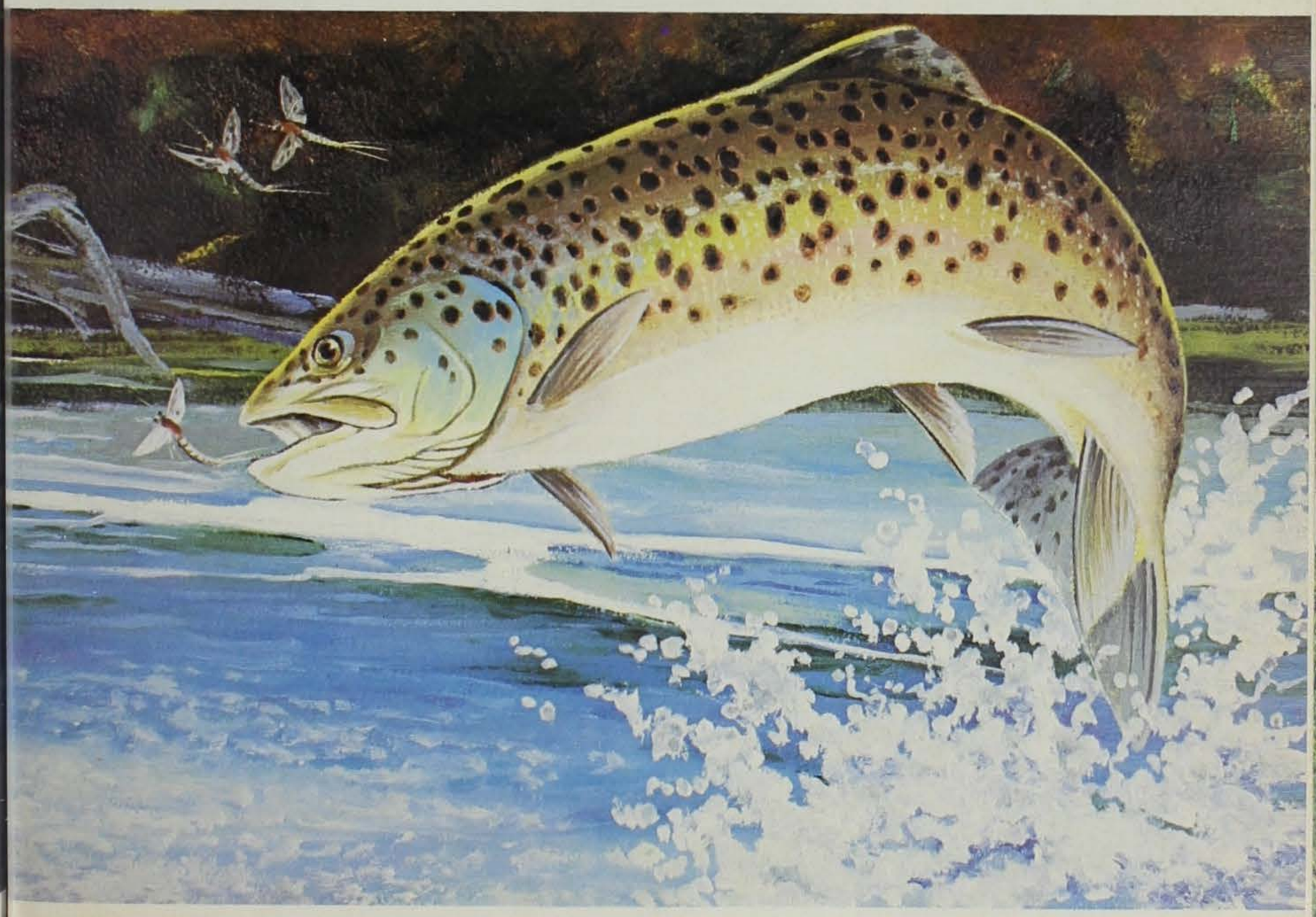
Iowa conservationist

JUNE 1978



Iowa conservationist
MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

A Message on Brushy Creek

by Fred A. Priewert

THE CONCEPT of developing a recreational lake in Webster County has its roots in the 1960's when the Iowa Conservation Commission and the Iowa Legislature approved a plan with the purpose of acquiring 4,200 acres at Brushy Creek near the town of Duncombe, Iowa. Justification for development of the lake has been based on the lack of major water features in the Webster County area and on the need to provide for unmet public demands for land and water-oriented outdoor recreation activities and programs.

The Conservation Commission officially approved the Brushy Creek Development Master plan in August of 1976. This action was a public commitment to proceed with the construction of a 980-acre lake and recreation facilities on this area.

Acquiring the Brushy Creek area primarily for a lake development has not precluded other land-based activity from becoming a vital part of the overall plan. Brushy Creek is designated a recreation area, allowing for the total spectrum of recreation needs.

Of the 4,200 acres at Brushy Creek, 2,300 acres will remain as ecological, recreation areas programmed for no development other than horseback/hiking and snowmobile trails. The other 920 acres are programmed for some type of active recreation, such as camping and picnicking.

Brushy Creek Recreation Area is a regional/statewide facility. Over 800,000 people live within a 90-mile drive of the site. The facilities and programs offered are not intended to be exclusive to any one user group but rather provide for all reasonable and compatible recreation activities being demanded. Our agency feels that the development of Lake Brushy is an important recreational project and one which should be completed as scheduled.

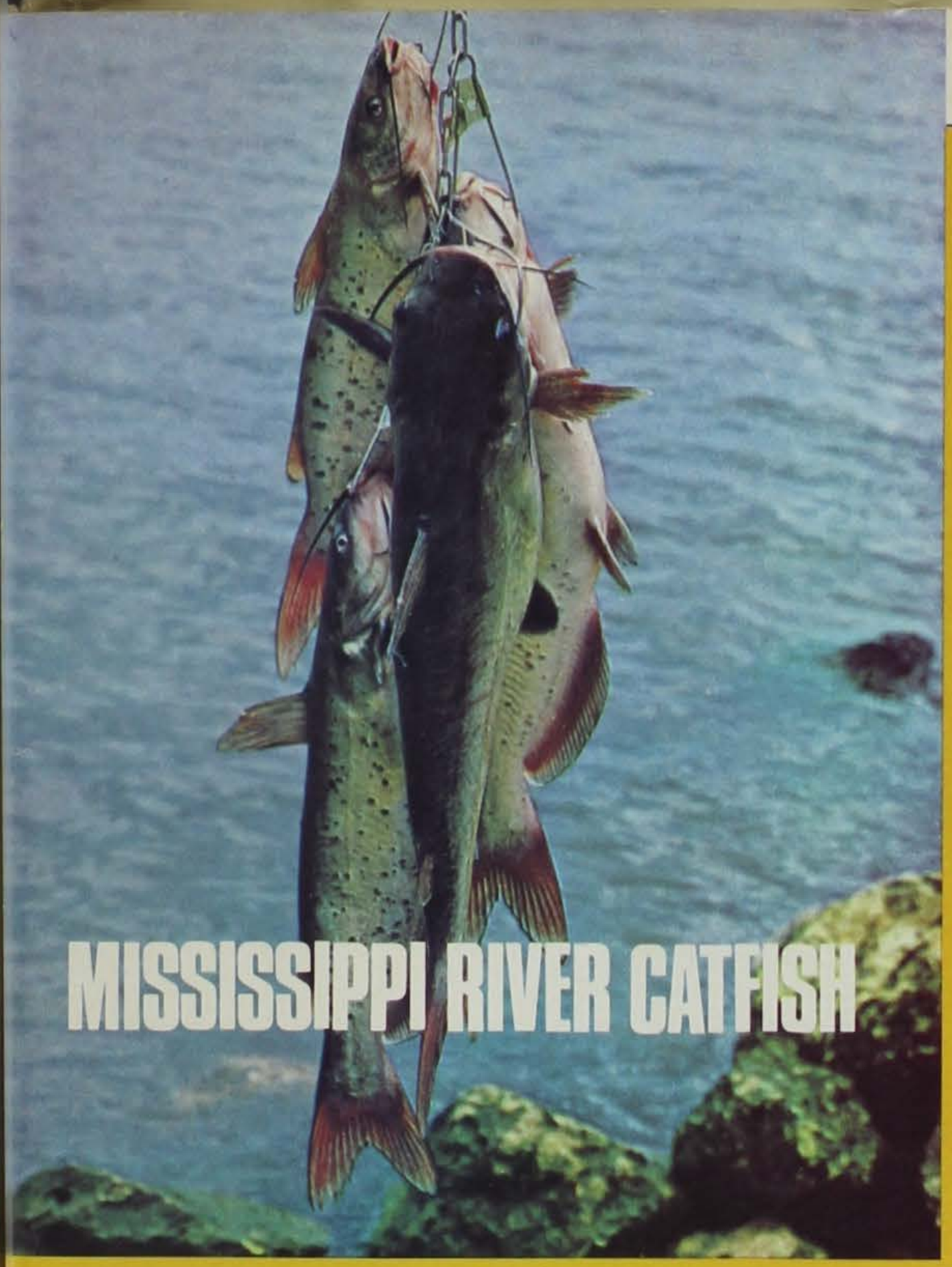
CHANNEL CATFISH, favorite of the Iowa angler, are also a very valuable product of the commerical food-fish fishery along the Mississippi River. It is from this rich yet fragile river system that Iowa fishermen market 200-400 thousand pounds of catfish each year. These "prairie trout" have a wholesale value of $130,000 — $260,000. Catfish are a quarter of a million dollar industry, a way of life for some, and a resource of interest to everyone.

During the past 10 years, extensive observations have been made on the channel catfish fishery by states bordering on the Upper Mississippi River, particularly Wisconsin and Iowa. In Iowa, we have examined over 40,000 catfish at various markets and landings. Measurements taken show that fish *under* 15 inches contribute about 70 percent of the number and about 55 percent of the weight harvested. During some years, these small fish have contributed up to 90 percent of the number harvested in individual pools. Generally, harvest in downstream pools tends to consist of smaller fish than harvested in upstream pools. Causes for these variations are attributed to differences in relative fishing pressure between pools and differences in the number of fish available for capture and harvest each year.

What determines how many fish are available for harvest in any one year? Why are there fluctuations in harvest? What could we do to reduce these fluctuations?

The answer to these questions and the solution it provides would provide commercial fishermen with a more reliable resource and give the Iowa angler the opportunity to catch more and larger fish.

To answer these questions, to provide the commercial fishermen with a more reliable resource, and to give the Iowa angler the opportunity to catch more and larger catfish a research contract was entered into with the National Marine Fisheries Service under authority of the Commerical Fisheries Research and Development Act.



MISSISSIPPI RIVER CATFISH

MADE BETTER!

by Tom Gengerke
FISHERY RESEARCH BIOLOGIST

PHOTO BY KEN FORMANEK

Vital statistics of channel catfish were described for Pools 9, 11, 13 and 18. The primary objective of the study was to learn what determines how many fish are available to fishermen each year. Cause and effect relationships for a wide variety of factors were evaluated. Input from commercial fishermen, especially those with many years of experience, was solicited. Bordering states with their own independent investigations were contacted. As might be expected, more than a single factor affects how many fish are produced and survive each year. However, the factor of greatest significance and the one which could be controlled directly was the number of mature fish available for reproduction. Quite simply, we are not allowing enough fish to reach maturity. The solution then, would be to insure that more fish are given the opportunity to reach maturity and reproduce. A variety of programs designed to meet this goal were considered. Closing the season during the spawning run, closing the season to basket fishing, closing the season periodically as necessary to permit the population to recover, and increasing mesh size in nets and holes in back of baskets were just a few of the solutions considered. Of the alternatives, the best approach would be to increase the minimum length limit for commercially marketed catfish from 13 inches, when only a few fish are mature, to 15 inches, when about 50 percent have reached maturity. This approach has been agreed upon by fishery biologists from all five states bordering the Upper Mississippi.

Now we've identified the problem and we've offered a solution, let's take a look at the benefits we might expect from such a program.

There would be a 10 percent loss in numbers during the time it takes for the fish to grow from 13 to 15 inches. Thus, for every 100 fish over 13 inches at the present time, there would be 90 fish over 15 inches following the increase in commerical size limit. The 90 fish, however, being larger, would weigh about 30 percent more than the original 100. The transition would be completed before the end of the first growing season; therefore, there would be little or no change (positive or negative) in commercial value of the fishery during that year. Immediately after the first growing season, there would be an overall increase in the monetary value of the fishery. There would be approximately 60 percent more fish available to Iowa anglers. Harvest fluctuations caused by poor year classes would be reduced. Additionally, since most catfish do not mature until they reach 15 inches, the increase in numbers of mature fish may reduce spawning failures.

Iowa was the first state to suggest this approach for better catfish fishing. Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Missouri reviewed our findings, conducted independent investigations and adopted a 15 inch minimum length limit for commercially caught catfish. We, however, have not. In those waters not affected by Iowa's 13 inch length limit, harvest appears to exhibit more stability than in those waters governed by a 13 inch length limit. Under present regulations there is a long-term trend (20 years) towards poorer harvests of channel catfish from the Upper Mississippi River.

The problem is real and will not disappear. We have a solution and are currently working with the Legislature to change laws in order that the catfish resource in Mississippi River be better managed for all Iowans. □

Iowa's Open Space Program It's Working!

by Jim Scheffler
OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER

IN JULY of 1973, Governor Ray signed into law the Open Space Land Acquisition Program. This legislation provided the Iowa Conservation Commission with $2,000,000 for the acquisition of significant natural areas, including additional lands necessary for the optimum management of existing public facilities. Under the program, the Commission was granted authority to initiate land acquisition proceedings on a prompt, willing seller basis as desired tracts became available. This provided the flexibility necessary for an acquisition program statewide in scope, encompassing a large number of landowners.

The law specifies several types of areas that may be purchased with the open space monies. They are:

1. Significant river, lake, wetland, prairie, forest or other biologically significant areas within the state.
2. Lands necessary to consolidate existing public ownership.
3. In-holdings including abandoned railroad right-of-way within existing public lands.
4. Lands required for the expansion of existing areas that will result in optimization of management for public recreation opportunities and for the provision of buffer areas to prevent encroachment or conflicting land uses with that on adjacent public lands.
5. Lands containing significant archaeological, historical or state preserve values.

Since 1973 the Commission has received $5 million from the Legislature and has acquired nearly 15,000 acres of land. Projects recently reviewed total an estimated $2 million.

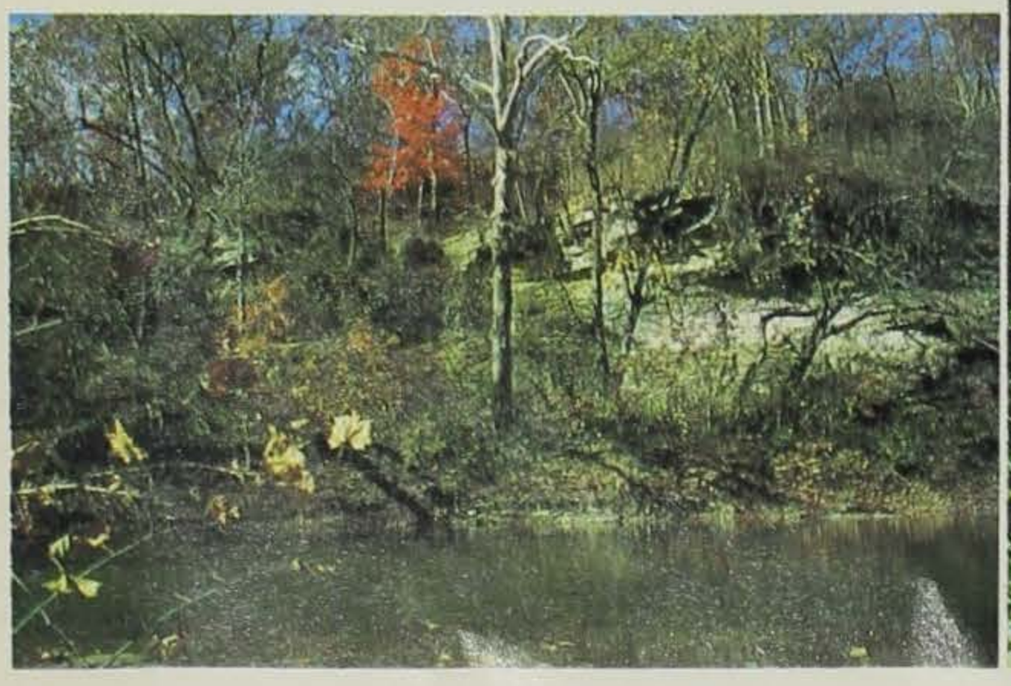
It is critical that Iowa acquires its remaining natural areas. Less than five (5) percent of the state remains in the more natural setting of woodland and marsh. Except for a few small, scattered patches, Iowa's once dominant landscape type, the prairie, has vanished.

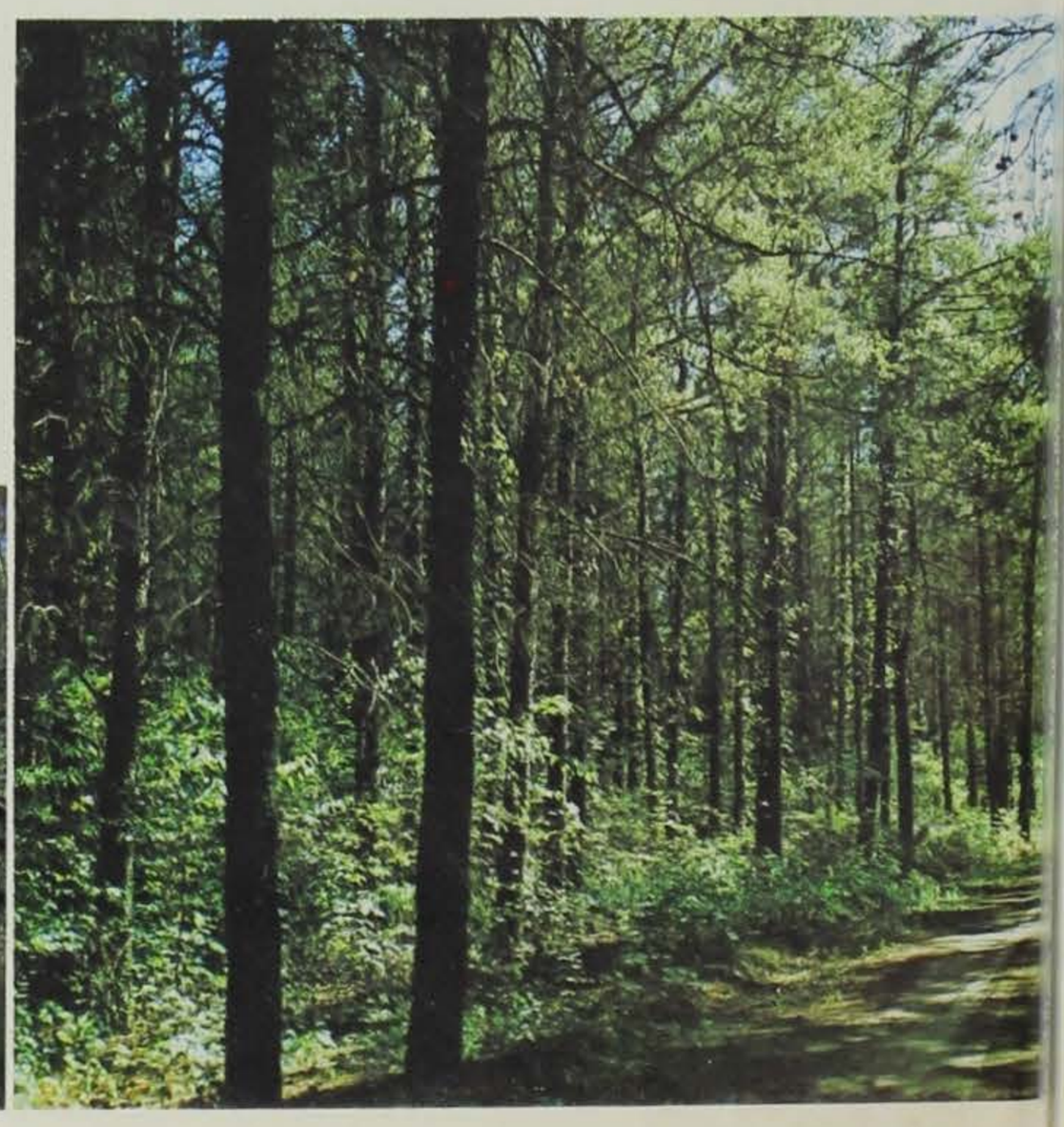
Increases in the price of agricultural commodities have greatly accelerated the conversion of woodland to crop and pasture land. Farm consolidation and mechanization have also facilitated this process. Idle lands are rapidly being put into production and as a result, Iowa's natural areas are disappearing at an alarming rate. Timber is being bulldozed, marsh areas drained, and prairie remnants obliterated.

Pressures are also being brought to bear on existing recreation areas. A major purpose of the open space program is the acquisition of lands necessary for the protection of those areas.

The Open Space Program, as developed by the Conservation Commission, offered the first major opportunity for Iowa to develop a positive program of natural and historic area acquisition without the negative effects too often associated with large scale development projects. It is a program developed by Iowans for Iowans, the purpose of which is the creation of a "public trust" of natural, open space. Lands acquired through the program will help to ensure the continued availability of at least some of Iowa's natural areas and resources for future generations.

Potential projects are judged according to the following criteria: (1) Project significance; (2) Project uniqueness; (3) Urgency of acquisition; (4) Percent of crop or developed land;



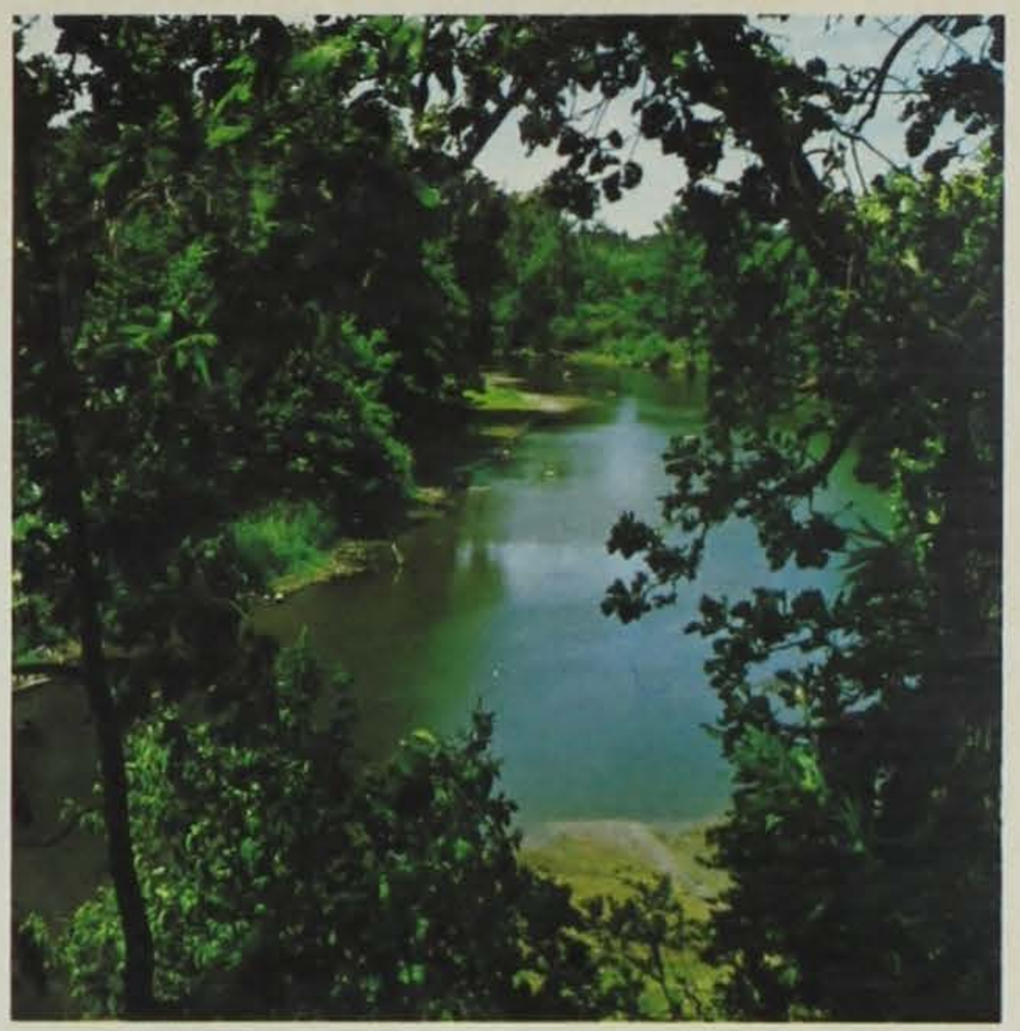


OPEN SPACES FUNDING

1st Session 65th General Assembly	July 1973	2,000,000
2nd Session 65th General Assembly	July 1974	500,000
1st Session 66th General Assembly	July 1975	500,000
2nd Session 66th General Assembly	July 1976	1,500,000
1st Session 67th General Assembly	July 1977	500,000
	TOTAL TO DATE	5,000,000
2nd Session 67th General Assembly	Request	$500,000
	TOTAL ACRES TO DATE	14,928.31

(5) Cost; (6) potential relocation costs; (7) Relationship to existing public areas (in holdings, expansions, consolidations, etc.); and (8) State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan priority.

Lands acquired under the Open Space Program are, of course, for a variety of outdoor recreation activities. However, the emphasis of the program is on acquisition, the creation of a "public trust" of natural land for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations of Iowans. Therefore, the majority of lands acquired will not undergo extensive development, but rather, will be enjoyed for their natural qualities by area visitors. *(Continued Page 13)*



Summer Treats

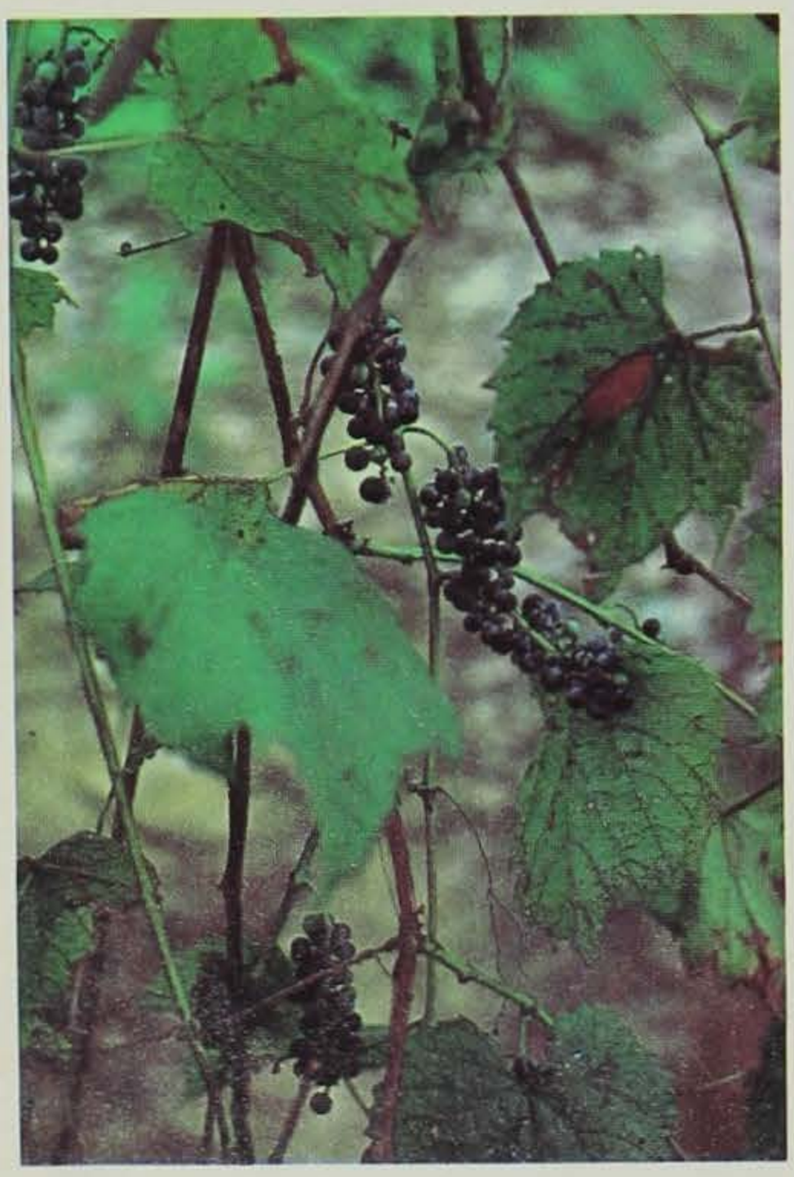
FEW PEOPLE are aware of the delicious, nutritious food that is available in late spring and summer. We are so busy dashing from one place to another that we aren't aware of what we pass by each day. Iowa's road ditches are full of delectable fruits provided by nature at no cost. The only areas where you will not find these treats is where man's "progress" has destroyed them by chemicals sprayed for control of weeds and brush.

Let's look at just a few of these roadside treats and how they can be enjoyed. Most people have seen sumac growing in the fall along ditches, and enjoy the sight of crimson leaves and seed heads. It will also provide a wonderful summer drink. The clusters of hard red sumac fruit can make sumac "lemonade". The fruits or berries are best if collected during late summer or early fall. Pick a few generous handfuls of the red berries. Place these in a pan and mash them, then cover with boiling water and set aside to steep. When the liquid is well colored, strain it through a folded towel to remove the fine hairs which were on the berries. Sweeten the sumac lemonade to taste, and serve hot or cold. This refreshing drink is really good after a hard afternoon of work.

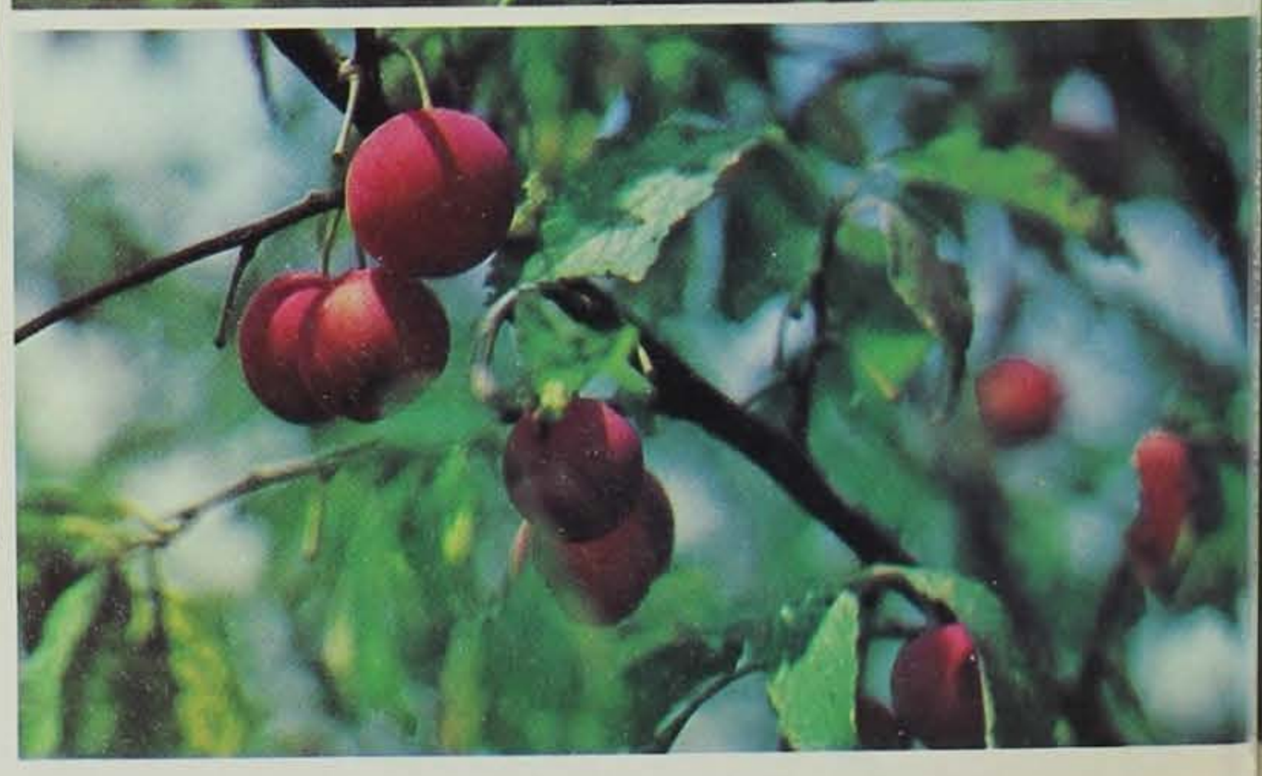
Many country road banks provide a real treat in late spring with wild strawberries. They are smaller than domestic strawberries, but the flavor cannot be matched. The sweet berries are worth the work of picking. Wild strawberries are delicious in short cake, tarts, sauces, jams and jellies, or just with cream or milk. The leaves also make a soothing tea, high in vitamin C. Combine two handfuls of green leaves in a quart of boiling water. Allow it to steep for 5 minutes and serve with a bit of lemon juice and honey.

The wild rose is a beautiful flower and will provide a delicious treat. Rose hips can be used for making jams and jellies, or dried and ground for rose hip tea. A tea can be made from the flowers also. Two teaspoons of fresh leaves will make a fragrant tea when steeped for 5 minutes in boiling water. Avoid the dark red petals because they are stronger tasting than the light

WILD GRAPE



WILD RASPBERRY (ABOVE) AND WILD PLUM (BELOW)



Photos by the Author

pink petals. Tea can also be made from the leaves and roots of the wild rose.

The wild raspberry is probably familiar to all and enjoyed by many. When picking this delectable goody, wear long sleeved clothing because of the thorns on the raspberry canes. Wild raspberries are delicious in homemake ice cream, served with milk or cream, or made into jams or jellies. These leaves also make a delicious tea.

Mulberries are to be enjoyed if they have not been cut out or sprayed in the road ditches. They are good raw or in jellies, pies and their sweetness is especially good when modified with a dash of lemon. Mulberry juice is an easily obtained thirst quencher.

Wild grapes are becoming less numerous along our road ditches because they are highly susceptible to chemical sprays or drifting spray. Wild grapes can be used to make juice or grape jelly. Grape jelly is best if the majority of the fruit is a bit underripe.

Wild plums are a true delight. They can be used to make a tart cool drink, jams, or pie. When fully ripe, they are fantastic eaten as fresh fruit.

These are just a few of the many treats which can be found growing along country road ditches. Unfortunately they are not as plentiful as in the past, and less plentiful each year. Chemicals sprayed to control weeds and plants have destroyed many such fruits. These wild edibles are also enjoyed by wildlife for food. But in certain areas, indiscriminate spraying has completely destroyed many of them.

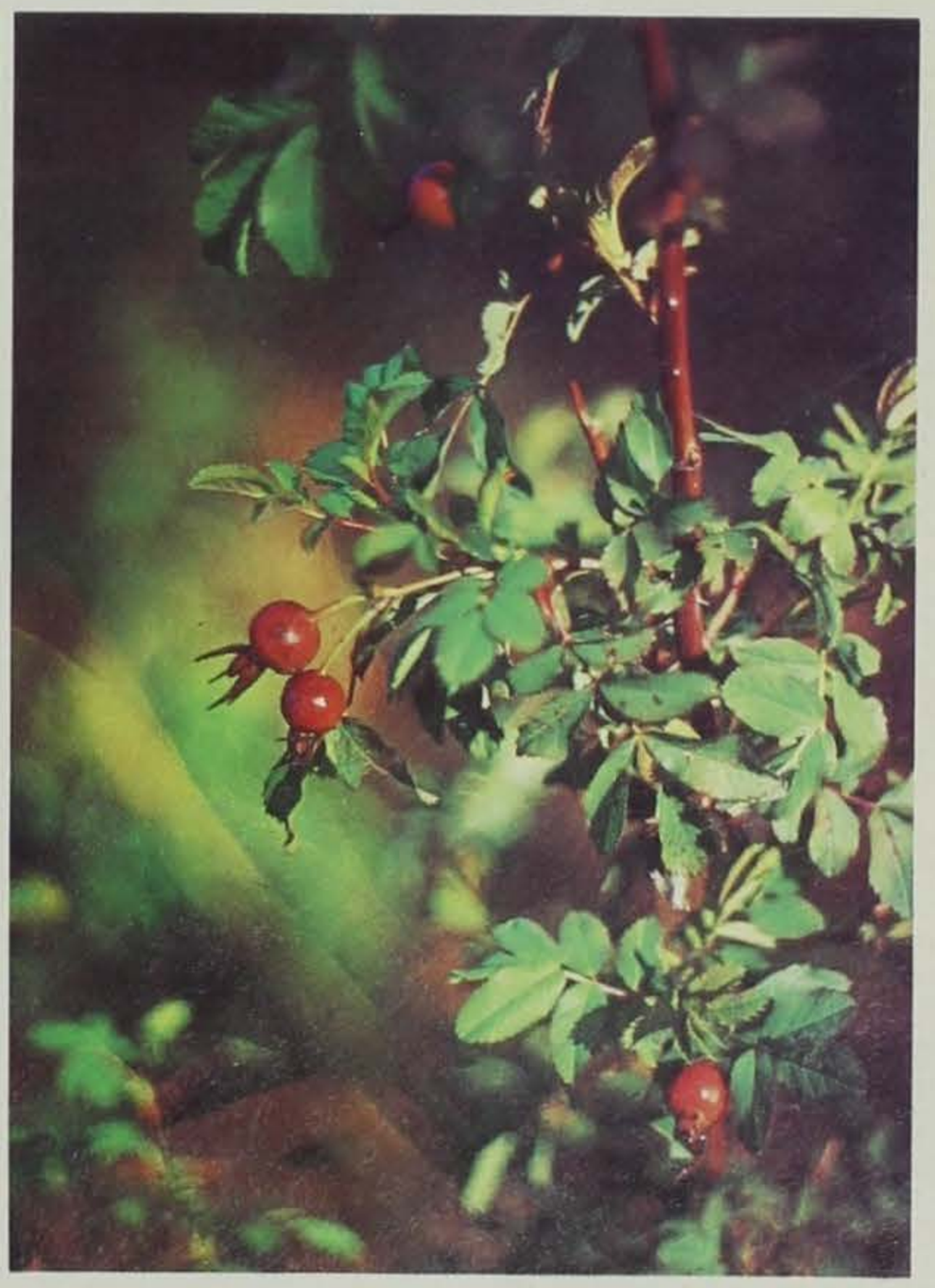
If you collect these treats in the road sides, there is no problem of trespass. If you are going on private property, make sure you first get permission from the landowner.

There are many good books written about wild, edible foods. Perhaps you would find one interesting and helpful. This year, why not enjoy some of these summer treats, and enjoy the Iowa outdoors at the same time?

by Bob Mullen
STATE CONSERVATION OFFICER

SUMAC (ABOVE) AND MULBERRY

WILD ROSE HIPS



THE AMANA LILY

THE TOURISTS THAT VISIT the Amana Colonies each year expose a lot of film! The older sandstone homes, the museums, well-tended gardens, antiques, arts and crafts — all make interesting subjects for photographers.

One of the often photographed areas is the unique Amana Lily Lake. This lake began as a natural low area, which was enhanced by spillover from the six mile long Amana canal. The canal was built with oxen-pulled slip scrapers shortly after the Civil War. The lotus lilies became established shortly after that period. Local legend states that early Indian tribes used to gather occasionally on the lake shore to gather some of the underwater roots for food.

Highway 220 between Amana and Middle Amana makes a gentle curve around the north side of the lake. There are several spots along this highway where one can pull off the road and onto a grassy shoulder adjacent to the lake. Some picnic tables and a small shelter are available.

Early spring bullhead fishermen fish the shoreline until the lilies become so abundant that it hinders fishing.

When the lilies bloom, usually in July-August, an increasing number of tourists stop at the lake edge to view the large

Photos by the Author

LILY LAKE

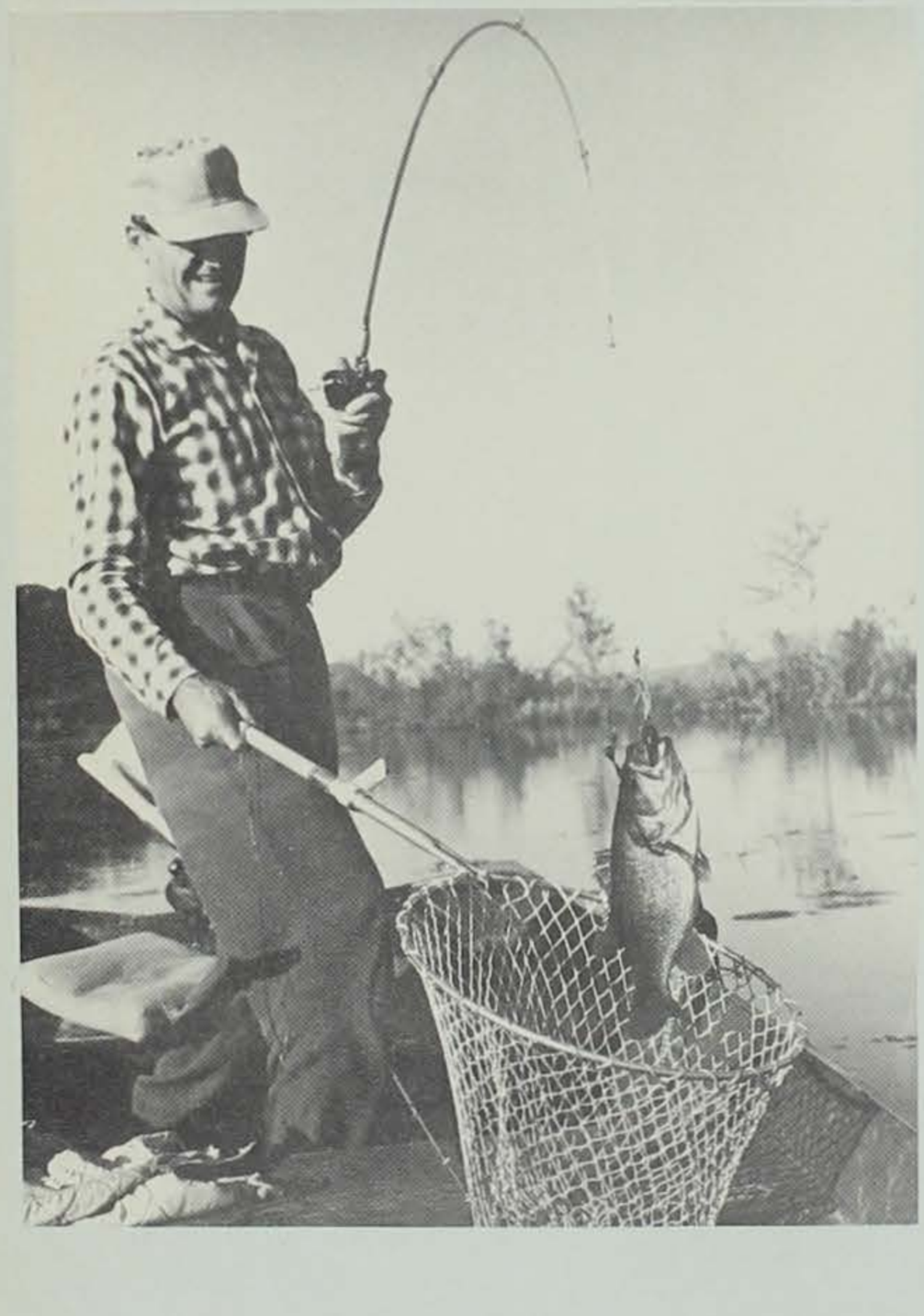
by Wendell Simonson
CONSERVATION OFFICER

yellow flowers amid the large, round, floating green leaves. Local children make some spending money by wading out into the shallow water and bringing in the blooms and leaves for closeup photos. After the flowers begin to fade and die, the large center portion of the flower has a large pod which becomes quite hard and is used for ornamental winter bouquets.

Migrating waterfowl drop into the lake in both spring and fall. During the spring, many wildlife enthusiasts can be seen scanning the lake with field glasses and spotting scopes. During the early fall, local hunters begin to rebuild their duck blinds and put out their decoy spreads. Because the lake is in private Amana ownership, the blinds and decoys can be left out all fall. One unusual visitor last fall, just before the duck season, was a large pelican who spent several days socializing with some of the goose and duck decoys!

Some of the backwater areas of the Mississippi river have a few beds of the lotus lilies, and also a lake or two in Illinois and Wisconsin. The Amana Lily lake, with its easy accessability to the public, makes it a unique feature to the Amana Colonies.

TIPS on CATCHING LARGEMOUTH BASS



BY
THOMAS A. DENLINGER, DUBUQUE

WHERE DID the notion start that bass fishing is only for the guy with expensive equipment? It's high time that idea is put to rest once and for all. Sport fishermen have been chasing and catching the wily largemouth bass for years — long before the day of trolling motors, fancy rods and reels, high priced bass boats, and high powered motors. Any fisherman who can get himself to the backwaters of the Upper Mississippi can get a stringer of largemouth. Some know-how and a little perseverance will do the trick!

Know Something about Largemouth Bass

Most bass fishermen agree that the largemouth strikes artificial baits more out of aggravation than hunger. The reactions of bass to stimuli have been studied under various conditions before feeding, after feeding, between feedings, during days or nights, under varying barometric pressures and moon phases. Conclusions of these tests point out that bass are temperamental and in varying degrees. At times, the largemouth is rather passive and indifferent to an invasion of its territory by a lure. At other times, the bass is easily angered and will strike at almost anything. Since the reaction to baits is fairly unpredictable except during spawning, the smart angler doesn't give up easily. If the spot chosen looks good and maybe has given up fish on another day, the fisherman should not assume when the first or second cast yields no strike that "Mr. Bass is not at home." The lure should be worked into, by, and through the spot a number of times. Sometimes the bass can be "bugged" into striking out of plain orneriness. At other times, a change of lure or a change of the speed on retrieve can bring a strike. Some of the largest bass caught are the results of ten or fifteen casts into a good stump, log or weed bed. In other words, work an area well before moving.

Discover When to Fish

Without question, the best fishing for largemouth is during the spawning season. This generally occurs in about May when the water temperature in the shallows reaches about 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Even the most seasoned bass fisherman has trouble pinning down the exact spawning time on the Upper Mississippi, but those who are lucky enough to be out during spawning can fish sunup to sundown, getting strikes on almost every cast. Over the last few years, the spring rise in the river has frequently coincided with what should be spawning time, and so the really great fishing has been spasmodic. However, an angler who gets out regularly enough just might be lucky to hit part of the spawning bonanza. There is plenty of other good bass fishing time available on the backwaters, too. Spring and fall, bass can be taken at almost any hour of the day, and since there's a continuous season, it's never too early in spring or too late in fall, as long as wind and safety permit. During the summer months, bass should be fished early morning or late evening. Mid-day is generally unproductive.

Get a Feel for the Likely Spots

Bass on the Upper Mississippi backwaters can be located near stumps, logs, fallen trees and brush, off the points of islands, in water lily beds and weed beds, and near wing dams. As a good rule of thumb, spring and fall will find the bass in shallower waters and the heat of the summer will find them moving out to the deeper cuts and wing dams. The considerable fluctuation of water levels due to the Lock and Dam system presents a problem to the bass fisherman. However, the problem is not insurmountable. Generally speaking, if a stump or log has a foot or better of fairly clean water around it, it's a likely spot. Remembering where those good logs, stumps and islands are can bring bass in high water, too. The largemouth bass tends to prefer non-swift moving waters which are fairly clean. If a backwater is very muddy or is dead water, the bass move out.

Select the Proper Tackle

The advent of the spinning reel probably did more for the average fisherman than any other invention. In the past, bass fishing was confined to the guy who could handle a casting

reel accurately and without bird's nests. Now, with the spinning reel the problem of bird's nests is obsolete. Couple a spinning reel and about a six foot pistol grip rod with good tip action, and the angler is in business. If accuracy of casts is a problem, some practice in the yard throwing at a paper plate will pay off in getting the bait near and not on a good stump or log when fishing. A ten pound test monofilament line is a good all-round choice. Since the Mississippi backwaters are not as clear as lake waters generally are, this choice of line won't scare any fish. However, if the water is extremely clean and clear, a lighter line might prove a better and more profitable selection.

Choose a Few Good Lures and Baits

There are thousands of artificial baits and lures on the market, plus the available live baits. It is not necessary to have a twenty drawer tackle box full of lures to produce a stringer of largemouth. Bass fishermen can never agree on what is the best lure since each has his selection of favorites. However, nothing works all the time, so the angler should have a good basic selection and vary it on a trial and error basis. A tackle box should include some spinner baits, with either single or twin spinners for buzzing shore lines and weed beds in spring and early fall. Use the spinner baits with a pork chunk or a trailing pork rind. Hooks on the spinner baits point up, some with a weedless wire attached and with either colored skirts or natural hair covering part of the hook. Take advantage of the weedless feature where there are obstructions or weed beds. The choice of single or twin spinner determines the churning action and whether the lure rides high or low in the water. For use with spinning reels, the spinning lures should be of the lighter weights available. Include a few small crank baits in the tackle box to use on wing dams and in deeper water. These are the plugs which have scoops or lips on them and a rattler inside. Since the crank baits have either one or two grapple type hooks which hang down, these should be used with caution because of the tendency to get hung up. The crank baits are heavier and have a tendency to run deeper than the spinning lures, so underwater obstructions also present a problem. A number of plastic worms in a variety of colors should be on hand as a last resort when nothing else works in deeper waters, or for a soft presentation after a missed strike. A few agitators are handy to use in the spring or when the water is cold in the fall, since the lure can be thrown right at the bass and brought in fast to the boat at times when the fish are lethargic and passive and it's impossible to get strikes any other way. The agitators are made with scoops or bills on the front to cause a diving and thrashing motion. Since the agitators also have the grapple hooks, use them in open water with the same cautions as the crank baits. The agitators are light in weight so they start on the surface and then dive as the lure is retrieved. Minnows and nightcrawlers also produce largemouth bass when used with hook and bobber, so each to his own. Flexibility is the key to success. The fisherman who begins with his favorite lure or bait as indicated by water level and season, gives it a good number of tries in likely spots, and then has sense enough to change colors, lures or style of retrieves, will produce fish. The angler who stubbornly clings to his favorite through hell or high water will often go home disappointed.

Get Hooked on Largemouth Bass Fishing

For sport fishermen, getting to know the thrill of catching largemouth is addictive. There is always opportunity for the average guy with a small boat and low priced equipment. Give largemouth fishing a try and join the crowd of fishermen already hooked! □

OPEN SPACES (continued)

The public benefits to be derived from this type of long-range program clearly establish the need for a standing appropriation. This is particularly obvious in light of the minute percentage of state funding that this would represent. Much has been accomplished to date through the Open Space Program, and yet, much more urgently needs to be done. A long-range program is an absolute necessity to ensure that a vital element of life remains for future generations of Iowans. □

Public Owned Areas

AREA	COUNTY	ACRES	TYPE
Loess Hills	Monona	2452	Natural-Wildlife Area
Indian Bluffs	Jones	410	Natural-Wildlife Area
Upper Iowa River	Winneshiek	50.2	Natural-Wildlife Area
Fish Farm Mounds	Allamakee	304	Natural-Wildlife Area
Starr Cave	Des Moines	140	Natural Area-Preserve
Malchow Mounds	Des Moines	8.9	Natural Area-Preserve
Stephens State Forest (White Breast Area)	Clarke	520	Forest
Stephens State Forest	Lucas	490	Forest
Stephens State Forest (Supplemental Appropriation)	Lucas	160	Forest
Shimek State Forest	Lee	165	Forest
Pine Lake State Park	Hardin	18 Lots	State Park
Pine Lake State Park (Supplemental Appropriation)	Hardin	3 Lots	State Park
Walnut Woods State Park	Polk	2	State Park
Springbrook State Park	Guthrie	72	State Park
Stone State Park	Plymouth & Woodbury	155	State Park
Clear Lake State Park	Cerro Gordo	6.5	State Park
Lacey-Keosauqua State Park	Van Buren	132	State Park
Pioneer State Park	Mitchell	4.3	State Park
Miami Lake	Monroe	160	Wildlife Area
Elk Grove	Guthrie	680	Wildlife Area
Green Island	Jackson	190	Wildlife Area
Green Island (Supplemental Appropriation)	Jackson	382	Wildlife Area
Elk Creek	Worth	96	Wildlife Area
North Cedar-Sny Magill Creeks	Clayton	900	Trout Stream
North Cedar-Sny Magill Creeks (Supplemental Appropriation)	Clayton	363	Trout Stream
Big Mill Creek (2 Parcels)	Jackson	739	Trout Stream
Incl.-Houselog		230	
South Bear Creek	Winneshiek	80	Trout Stream
Little Turkey River-Ram Hollow Creek	Delaware	100	Trout Stream
Steamboat Rock Area	Hardin	122	County Cons. Area
Hickory Hills Park	Tama	175	County Cons. Area
Matsell Bridge	Linn	237	County Cons. Area
Andrews Property-North Raccoon River	Carroll	67	River Access
Bascom Property Middle Raccoon River	Guthrie	275	Wildlife Area
Gooder Property Cold Water Creek	Winneshiek	60	Trout Stream
Rosenow Property	Shelby	120	County Cons. Area
Kay Property East Nishnabotna River	Cass	72	River Access
Rekward Property Upper Iowa River	Winneshiek	160	Wildlife-River Access
Francis Property Maquoketa Caves State Park	Jackson	116	State Park
Stiles Property	Scott	33	County Cons. Area
Heffern Property Cameron Timber	Scott	21.9	County Cons. Area
Dahlby Property	Worth	40	Wildlife Area
Tenold Property Elk Creek Marsh	Worth	20	Wildlife Area
Miller Property	Appanoose	198	Stephens Forest
Craigmile Property	Ringgold & Decatur	1,839	Wildlife Area
Sellers Property	Lucus	160	Stephens Forest
Perley Property	Harrison	158	Wildlife Area
Wallis (2 Parcels) Deer Island	Harrison	9.31	Wildlife Area
Raymond Property	Harrison	7.18	Wildlife Area
Iowa River Conservation Club	Hardin	131.1	County Cons. Area
Waltz Property (right-of-way)	Clayton	20	Trail
Judge Property	Monroe	900	Wildlife Area
Williams Property	Hamilton	55	County Cons. Area
D.O.T. Property	Wright & Franklin	231.2	Wildlife Area
Spect Property	Clayton	308	Trout Stream

Under Option or In Negotiation

Area	County	Acres	Type
Draeger Property (option)	Hamilton	28.9	County Cons. Area
Brown's Lake Lots (option)	Woodbury	6 Lots	Wildlife Area
Fitzgerald Property (option)	Clay	52	Wildlife Area
Crown Property (negotiate)	Van Buren	40	Forest Area
Fotsch Property (negotiate)	Van Buren	12	Forest Area
Miller Property (negotiate)	Winneshiek	8.5	Wildlife Area
Toolesboro Area (negotiate)	Louisa	48.6	Upper Iowa River State Preserve

IOWA CAGE REARED CATFISH
a success story

By Robert Middendorf and Larry Mitzner

You thought confinement feeding was peculiar only to hogs, chickens, and cattle? Not so. Channel catfish have also made the list of animals which survive and grow well in confinement. Young catfish, when fed a balanced ration in confinement cages, gain weight about 4.5 times as rapidly as river catfish.

The primary advantage of confinement culture is greater survival of channel catfish after they are stocked. Survival of smaller catfish stocked in lakes with established predator populations is poor. However, the confinement method produces eight to ten-inch catfish which are large enough to escape predation, grow fast after release, and are readily caught by anglers. In 1970-1977, nearly 700,000 catfish were cage-reared and stocked in 50 Iowa lakes.

The method of cage confinement is quite simple. Small channel catfish (four to five inches) are placed in wire cages (3 x 4 x 8 feet) in May and fed, daily, through September. The pelleted ration fed to the catfish is commercially produced and readily available. In the autumn, the cage-confined fish are released in the lake where they were grown. This stocking should not exceed 100 fish per acre.

Iowa's successful cage-rearing program is a cooperative effort between the State Conservation Commission and participating county conservation boards. Since the beginning of the program, good catfishing has been established at many lakes where it didn't previously exist.

Success of the program is shown by the large number of stocked catfish which are caught. Many of the fish have attained a length of 10-14 inches when they are stocked and about 90 percent are caught within three years after release. This effort has resulted in the catch of approximately 630,000 catfish and many hours of fishing enjoyment.

CATFISHING

The sport of catfishing in lakes requires a special knowledge of the fish and its habits. The more you know about the catfish the greater your chances of success.

Channel catfish are not fussy and consume practically any animal life found in the lake. However, every catfisherman has his favorite baits which include manufactured or homemade stink baits, chicken liver, night crawlers, frogs, crayfish, shrimp, minnows, and cut bait. The important fact to remember is catfish are more selective at cooler water temperatures in spring and autumn. Cut baits are preferred by most anglers when water temperatures are less than 50°F.

Channel catfish are nocturnal and search for food mainly during the evening. This is particularly true in the summer. Obviously, you can increase your chances of success by fishing after sunset or early in the morning. However, the fact to remember is that many good stringers of "cats" are taken throughout the day. This is especially true in the spring shortly after ice-out or again in the autumn when the water begins to cool.

How deep to fish is also important. Many man-made lakes stratify at 10-14 feet during summer months (June, July, August). Low concentrations of oxygen and few fish are found below this level. If you are unfamiliar with the lake, ask other fishermen for information or contact the fisheries biologist in the area. He will tell you what baits to use, where and when to fish, and how fishing is at other lakes in the area.

Cages submerged.

These fish are ready for stocking.

A happy fisherman.

CATFISH CAGE LAKES

County	Lake	Surface area	Nearest town	Boats allowed	Motors allowed
Adair	Morman Trail	35	Bridgewater	Yes	No[1]
Benton	Hannen	43	Blairstown	Yes	No
Black Hawk-Tama	Hickory Hill	55	LaPorte City	Yes	No
Boone	Don Willimas	160	Ogden	Yes	6hp
Buchanan	Fontana Mills	60	Hazelton	Yes	No
Cass	Cold Springs	16	Lewis	Yes	No
	Griswold Pond	7	Griswold	Yes	No
Crawford	Nelson	13	Dow City	Yes	No
Decatur	Slip Bluff	15	Davis City	Yes	No
Delaware	Silver Lake	35	Delhi	Yes	No
Greene	Spring Lake	49	Grand Junction	Yes	No
Grundy	Stoehr Area	2	Wellsburg	No	
Hamilton	Briggs Woods	70	Webster City	Yes	No
Hancock	Eldred-Sherwood	25	Goodell	Yes	No
Hardin	Upper Pine	101	Eldora	Yes	6hp
Harrison	Schaben Pond	5	Dunlap	Yes	No
	Willow	17	Mondaman	Yes	No
Howard	Lake Hendricks	42	Riceville	Yes	No
Ida	Moorehead	12	Ida Grove	Yes	No
Iowa	Lake Iowa	96	Millersburg	Yes	No
Jasper	Mariposa	19	Kellogg	No	
Johnson	Kent	30	Tiffin	Yes	No
Jones	Central	24	Center Junction	Yes	No
Keokuk	Belva Deere Area	11	Sigourney	Yes	No
	Yenrougis	10	Sigourney	Yes	No
Kossuth	Smith	53	Algona	Yes	No
Mahaska	Keomah	88	Oskaloosa	Yes	No
Marion	County Board Lake	7	Knoxville	Yes	No
Monona	Oldham	12	Soldier	Yes	No
Monroe	Miami	142	Albia	Yes	6hp
Page	Pioneer	3	Shenandoah	Yes	No
Polk	Easter	228	Des Moines	Yes	6hp
Pottawattamie	Arrowhead	20	Neola	Yes	No
Poweshiek	Diamond	88	Montezuma	Yes	No
Ringgold	Lock Ayr	90	Mt. Ayr	Yes	No
	Old Reservoir	12	Mt. Ayr	Yes	No
Shelby	Manteno	11	Defiance	Yes	No
Sioux	Winterfield	17	Rock Valley	Yes	No
Story	Hickory Grove	92	Colo	Yes	No
Tama	Otter Creek Lake	70	Toledo	Yes	No
Union	Thayer	14	Thayer	Yes	No
Washington	County Board 4 Areas	6	[2]	Yes	No
Webster	Badger	60	Badger	Yes	No
Winnebago	Catherine	17	Forest City	Yes	No
Winneshiek	Meyer	35	Calmar	Yes	No
Woodbury	Little Sioux	12	Correctionville	Yes	No

[1] No gas operated motors, but at most lakes electric trolling motors are allowed.
[2] Areas located throughout the country.

FROM THE

Warden's diary

by Rex Emerson
LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR

IT WAS ONE of those warm, sunshiny perfect June days. Evidently most of the fishermen were working and wouldn't be out until evening. It was nice to be out walking along the shoreline of the lake while listening to the birds sing, the bass fiddle voice of the bullfrog, or the occasional splash of a fish on the surface of the water. Around a point of the shoreline I saw two boys fishing. As I approached it was obvious that my presence was making them nervous. When I spoke to them they both said, *"We're not doing anything wrong, are we?"*

I assured them that they were not doing anything wrong and asked if they were having any luck. They had been getting some nibbles, but no fish.

Sometime during their young lives they had been led to believe that an officer was one of the "bad guys" — someone who was out to *get* them! Usually this is the fault of the parents. I know, parents get tired of getting the blame for everything. Ask any uniformed officer in the state how many times he has heard mothers threaten their youngsters by saying, *"See that policeman over there? If you don't be good he will put you in jail."*

Now that is "sick", but it does happen. Then there is TV, but we won't get into a discussion on the programs that parents let the children watch.

This was a time for some public relations. If I could change the uneasy feelings and mistrust these two boys had about a "game warden" my time would be well spent. They were brothers. One was twelve years old and the other ten and a half, *"almost eleven"*. I sat down on the grassy bank about ten feet from them and tried to start some kind of a conversation. It was sort of a one-sided conversation with some quick short answers, along with some curious glances in my direction.

When I asked what kind of fish they were fishing for, they said, *"Anything that will bite."* I asked if they would like me to help them catch some fish. Not only did I get an affirmative answer, but I thought I detected a bit of a smile from the one who was ten and a half, "almost eleven".

"Hang in there, guys. I am going up to the car to get some tackle", I told them.

When I returned the older boy had his hook reeled in ready to bait. They were curious about what I had in the small plastic bag. It had some small hooks, small bobbers and some small sinkers. It would have taken a Moby Dick to get on the hooks they were using, and their bobbers were as big as apples. The older boy gave me permission to change his equipment over to the smaller tackle. While doing this I told him we would put his large size tackle in the sack and he could keep it to use later if he wished. With the small hook baited with a nice plump nightcrawler and a small sinker placed on the line about eighteen inches from the hook, we decided to leave the bobber off and try some bottom fishing for bullheads. This looked like a good spot for bullheads, and bullheads seem to really like small boys who feed them nice juicy nightcrawlers.

By this time the smaller boy who was ten and a half, "almost eleven", had his line in and was clamoring, *"Do mine next, do mine next!"*

While making the changes on his line we all got on a first name basis. He decided that he would like to catch some bluegills, so we added the smallest bobber that I had. We used a small hook, with a large split shot for a sinker about six inches from the hook and put the bobber about two feet up from the hook. We used just a little piece of nightcrawler for bait. He looked at me with a blank expression on his face when I told him to cast it just to the outside of that narrow band of arrowhead. He did all right though after I explained that "arrowhead" was the kind of plants that were growing there in the water. The first boy had a bullhead on by this time and had a great time reeling it in. Their rods and reels were not too good, and it was obvious the reels had been laid down in the sand, because they made noises like a coffee grinder. But the fishing tackle that costs $3.98 is just as good as $100.00 equipment if it serves the purpose and the user has some fun. After all, that's what fishing is all about.

Their mother had brought them out to the lake this afternoon and dropped them off. Their dad would come after them when he got off work. It seems that dad didn't ever take them fishing — too busy. Where have I heard that before? However, I don't know of a better place for two boys to spend an afternoon as long as they are instructed to stay out of the water so they don't drown. There are no animals in the woods to harm them, but they should be told about such things as poison ivy, which was growing a few feet away.

We had a little luck and the time went fast. It wasn't long until we heard a car horn and it was time to go. As I was going that way, anyway, I helped carry their fishing equipment, including the bait can. They didn't want to be litterbugs and leave the bait can on the bank.

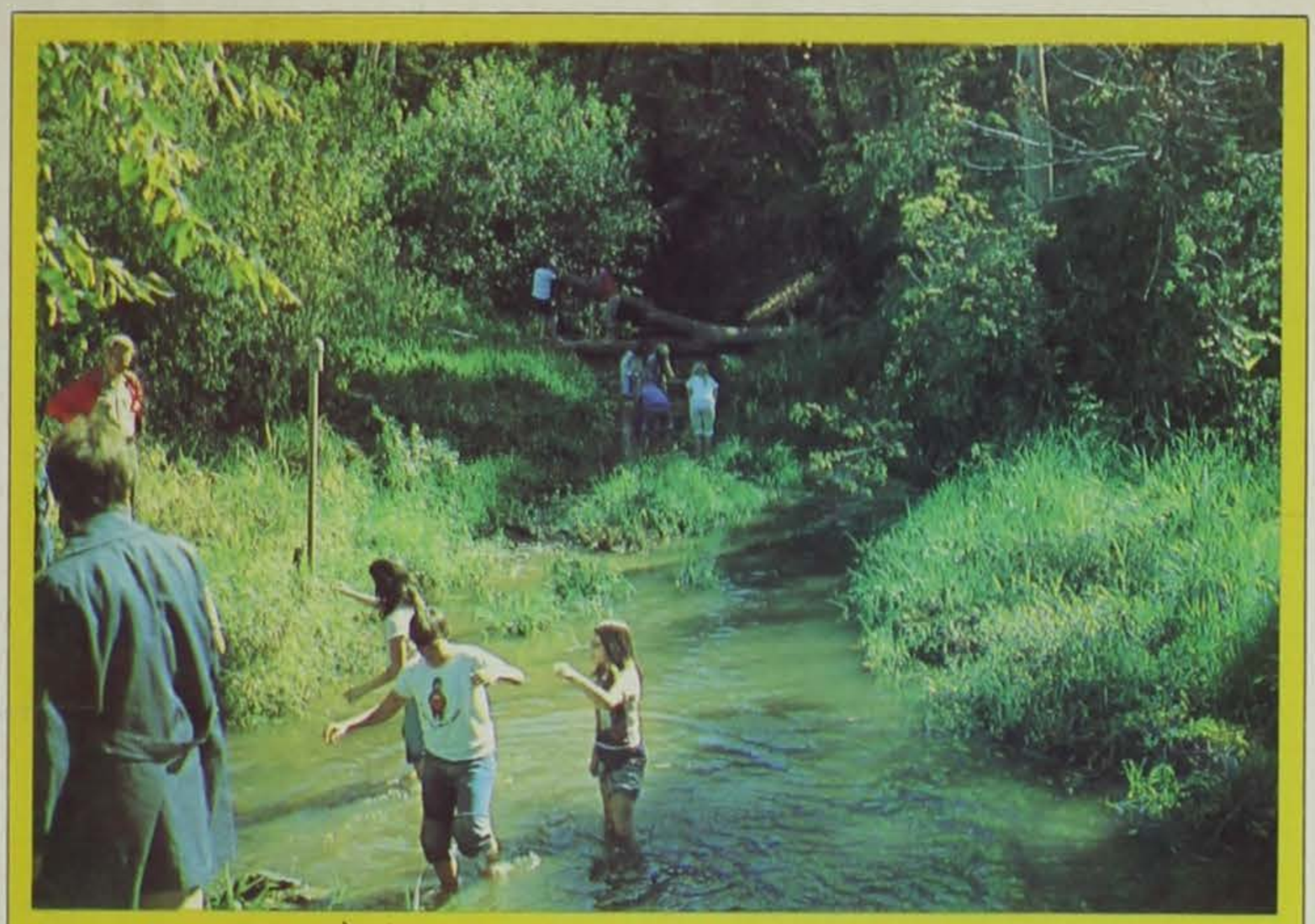
They were quite proud of the three bullheads and five bluegills that they had caught, until their dad said *"What are you going to do with those stinkin' things?"*

The boy who was ten and a half, "almost eleven" was still excited because he had caught the most and told his dad they had learned what poison ivy is and arrowhead and had heard a quail whistle, and had seen a turkey vulture in the sky.

I said goodbye to my two young friends and silently hoped they would tell the other kids that game wardens are really "good guys". I told their dad that he should take time to go fishing with boys, that he really didn't know what a good time he was missing. Also, he would get to know the boys a whole lot better than he does now.

He said he just didn't have time. I hope he remembers this conversation ten years from now when he wonders one day what became of his little boys.

"I've been there, fella'. Oh, yes, I've been there."



Classroom Corner

by Robert Rye
ADMINISTRATOR, CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

STREAMS are very individualistic. Find a person who has spent time by one and have him describe his stream. It has its own beginning and end, sound and smell, as well as inhabitants and way of reacting during flooding.

The stream through Springbrook Park has been enjoyed by many visitors — not only the classes at the Education Center, but also the campers who use the park.

Groups from the Center often travel the stream area on an observation hike. This hike includes a walk down a deer trail through a mature forest. As the trail winds up and down the hills, spring flowers, small mammals, or even the trees themselves absorb the group's interest as it moves along. At one point the trail ventures along the side of a hill overlooking a large open space. This space used to be the camping area of the park. Unseen by the group and at the foot of the hill, is the stream.

Soon the group is silent, eyes closed, listening to the stream. After a short time span, the brave of the group verbalize their first impressions — a short poem or even a made-up history lesson describing the area many years ago. The stream is now part of their life, much like the inhabitants of the stream, but limited only to the sounds below them.

Their new sights quickly drive the moment into the past, as eagerness forces the participants to find the realities of the stream.

As the group approaches the stream more closely, the frogs quiet and the stream's concert is now the isolated stimulus. Eyes grab for their initial focal points, which may be an owl's nest in an old dead tree or the old rock fireplaces located on the stream's banks.

Most participants are now eager to complete their investigation, which started a long time ago, up on the deer trail on the hill. The plants, animals, and rocks are observed in many ways — each person inflicts his own values upon what he sees.

Plants commonly fall into the group of "what is it." The names can rarely be repeated by any but an ardent botanist. The activity then moves to "where was it." This develops the larger ecological picture which, for their stay, is more useful.

Animals from the stream area are collected and studied. The smaller animals go into containers, one in each, and are observed as to how they move. First by themselves, with an accompaning nonliving object, and finally with a "partner" animal. Recordings are usually made, but the high points are when the group draws parrallels with "human animals" and when the information is sorted to discover how many animals can be found in a representative area.

As with all concerts, they must end — only to be performed for the next audience. This audience is taking with them memories of the events to be compared with other encounters on the observation hike.

LOOKIN' BACK

Thirty years ago the

Iowa Conservationist featured a story on carp fishing and the results of a poll on carp fishing importance. It was found that in nearly half of the 48 districts covering the state there were many regular carp fishermen. In another fourth of the districts there were occasional carp fishermen. The regular carp fishermen used their catch for food and claimed that carp from streams were better than carp from lakes.

Twenty years ago

the magazine took a look at bass fishing. The lures mentioned were bass-o-renos, jitterbugs and poppers. There were no tandem-spins or alphabet lures. It's a wonder they could catch any bass at all . . . or is it?

It was expected that one million Iowa acres would go into the Soil Bank program in 1958. Commission biologists expected great benefits to wildlife. The next dozen years would see many acres left in government programs. In the 1970's these programs would end and the land would soon be plowed.

Ten years ago the

Conservationist lead story was about walleye fishing on the Mississippi. The sport has not changed much over the last decade with fishermen still jigging lures and minnows in hotspots along wing dams and downstream from the dams.

A story was included about an "outdoor classroom" which was held for sixth grade students from the Fort Dodge area. The classroom was held in Dolliver State Park.